

In Memoriam by daisherz365

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Summary: Nancy finds Jonathan going to town on the tombstone that used to belong to his brother. She discovers that maybe she's not the only one still reeling about the events of the past. [Post S1]

In Memoriam

Post Season 1: Nancy finds Jonathan going to town on the tombstone that used to belong to his brother. She discovers that maybe she's not the only one still reeling about the events of the past.

Will had wanted to see the stone with his name on it. It had the quote of the song he loved so much introduced by Jonathan one day when his parents were going at each other throats. Beneath it the usual lines of 'loving son and brother, gone too soon' with the year of his birth and supposed death.

He tried to hold onto the idea that Will had called it cool even though Jonathan had noticed the way Mike Wheeler had had to look away from it. Jonathan knew that the kid had had a hard time after losing someone he had cared about just as much as his younger brother. He gave him a light pat on the shoulder while the others were occupied talking about if they could have kept it where would they put it.

There was talk about the Byer's Castle out behind the Byer's house which had been in renovation mode for quite some time. "It'll cave in." Jonathan added quietly to settle the discussion. He already had the sledgehammer in the back of his car. He was going to smash it to pieces. He didn't need the memory or the guilt of not believing his mother for so long. Will was living, there was no need for it anymore. As such no matter how the boys felt about it, it wouldn't be in the ground somewhere. It'd be put in one of those trucks to be reused somewhere.

"Damn. How about a photograph then?" Dustin, the chubbier boy out of the group asked smiling as he turned to Jonathan who had been somewhere else entirely. Somehow he had heard them though.

He cleared his throat, rubbing his hand against the back of his neck before nodding. "I'll go get it out of the car." He looked at his brother for a split second seeing how tired but happy he was in the company and all of his friends and the stone with his name on it he couldn't

help but give him a smile in return.

As he opened up the door of his car he heard the sound of the gravel of the road crunching under the feet of a new arrive. He nearly hit his head against the roof as he slipped out with his camera in hand and found a surprising sight. Nancy Wheeler was standing beside him, covering her mouth as to try not to laugh at him nearly hurting himself.

He wasn't that surprised to her. Her little brother was here. He just wasn't sure if she was coming to get him or not. He had chosen not to let his heart guide his mind after Christmas when it had become apparent that she was still dating Steve Harrington. They had grown closer in the days leading up to retrieving his brother from The Upside Down Place but he wasn't stupid enough to think that meant much now.

"Hi." She said after removing her hand from face.

"Hey." He looked down at his camera.

Before Nancy could attempt to start a conversation with him there was a roar of the kids yelling for him to come back already. He chanced a smile in her direction before shutting his car door. "They want to have something to remember the tombstone."

He was fully aware that his voice sounded flat. This hadn't been his idea. It was only lucky that Mrs. Wheeler wasn't in attendance when the boys all coerced Jonathan into bringing them along. It wouldn't be too long until he was left alone with it, or so he would hope.

He felt the slight brush of her arm accidentally hitting his hip as he trekked back up the hill where the children were waiting. He decidedly ignored it. "You don't sound too happy, Byers." She quipped just short of them making it to the group.

His lack of an answer worried Nancy but she kept it to herself. She had noticed the bikes when she had arrived on foot. Hopper had directed her towards the cemetery after hearing from one of his subordinates that they saw bikes heading that way. He had assumed she was looking for her little brother. Not day. She hadn't really

gotten a chance to talk to Jonathan. He had seemed okay the last time she had crossed paths with him intentionally during Christmas.

Today he seemed solemn. Nothing new when anyone thought of Jonathan Byers. He was standoffish by nature but she had figured that had changed now that he had his brother back. In part she supposed he was grateful to have Will but there was something else tugging at her inquisitive nature, and the small part in her heart that echoed that she just wanted to know that he wasn't suffering anymore.

He had helped her when she needed it. They had bonded together towards a common goal that in part made half of them reunite with a loved one. Barb was gone but they had Will. It was a win in some light. There was also the factor of the mysterious girl who had risked her life so that they had at least got that back. There were several things on Nancy's mind. The odd thing about it was that it took to her wanting to find him to realize that she only made sense of it when she was around him.

She stood to the side and watched the group of the four boys take several candid photos around the tombstone. To some degree she understood why they felt as though they had to document this experience. Odds are it would just be a story in a couple of years to the town itself. To them this was a part of their story of growing up. Nancy didn't think she had one of those adventures even in her youth. She stuck to books and Barb. She only had a portion of that now and it hurt a lot.

When he was done Jonathan shot the guys a thumbs up with a smile. "I got some good ones. I'll make sure to give you a few once I can process them."

"Thanks." They chorused before running off down to their bikes. Mike was the only one reluctant to follow.

Nancy for her part understood. She moved towards her brother as he stopped, touching the top of the cool stone. "I'm sure they haven't forgotten. She was their friend too."

"I didn't want to be here friend." Mike whispered lowly only for

Nancy to hear.

She knew that Jonathan was still there. He hadn't moved since the boys had flitted down the hill sidestepping the graves that they could on their way down.

Jonathan fiddled with his camera waiting for them to finish up. He wanted to take one more shot before he went to grab the tools he needed from the truck of his car.

Nancy reached out and ruffled her brother's hair affectionately. "I know. For what it's worth she cared about you too. I could see it. She did everything she did to make you happy. I know it might not seem like it but Will has been a part of your life much longer than she had. I'm sure she thought about it before deciding to do what she did. I can't say I did the same for Barb." She had never told him that the reason why Barb got taken was because she was stupid and wanted to be with Steve. That was something only Jonathan and her knew, beyond the police and her mother that is. None of that matter though.

"Okay." Mike replied. He didn't sound completely alright with what she had told him but he trusted Nancy. She had moved mountains to try to help him and his friends stay out of harm's way.

"I'll see you at home." She told him as she removed her hand from his head.

He nodded, giving her a smile before running down to meet his friends.

As Nancy turned she had to steel herself from reacting to the way Jonathan was looking at her. He was trying to figure something out. "You're wrong about what you said about Barb."

"What?" She breathed.

"You can try to make sense of it but I was right there too and I couldn't do a damn thing. I was closer and I couldn't save her, either."

"How about you let me take some of the blame, huh?" She wrapped her arms around herself.

He shook his head. "If I was someone else, I guess."

"You're not." She echoed.

He gave her a barely there smile. "Are you saying you're an expert on me now?"

"No. I have a pretty good idea though. Misunderstood with the weight of the world on his shoulder. Sounds pretty close."

"Not the world." He said quietly as he turned around and headed back to his car. She was following him.

When she saw the sledgehammer in the truck she hummed. "Why not just throw it in the river?"

"It's not good enough." He grunted as he shut the truck after retrieving the tool. She kept up with him pretty well.

"For you?" She questioned.

He said nothing about it.

"Jonathan." She sighed.

He stopped a few feet away from the tombstone.

"Why are you here?" He asked finally, he placed the tool down for a second and placed his hands in his pocket.

Nancy had weighed the answer for a long time. Over the past week she had thought about why she needed to seem him and she was still confused about that. There was nothing tying them together anymore. Nothing concrete anyhow. Nothing that sounded sane to anyone if she had the guts to tell them that. But, she had tried to be honest with Jonathan. Because he had always been to the point of being utterly brutal. She had envied his don't care attitude.

"I've been thinking about things."

"Things?" He echoed as he twisted around to look at her. He had forgotten how small she looked when she was contemplating serious

things. Things that scared the crap out of her. Before it had seemed so huge, now there was nothing out there to get them. Or push them together. He was still him, and she was still here albeit with a new cred in the eyes of Jonathan and perhaps Steve who had been around when they were fighting The Monster.

"No one knows just how much we've been through together." She started.

"So." He didn't think it mattered. She was still Nancy Wheeler and he was still the same person he was before.

"I can never tell her parents that she isn't missing."

"It's better that way."

"You believe that?" She scoffed.

"No. It's better if you start thinking that way. You're not like me. People have always thought that I'm insane. You don't need that."

"Oh how noble of you." She curtsied even though she wasn't wearing a dress today. She was in a similar getup as the last time she had found him attempting to shoot a beer can.

"I didn't say it because I'm so much better than anybody else. All signs point to the same conclusion, we have to let her stay buried unless something changes."

"What if I want to be that change?"

He groaned. "Nancy, why is this so important to you? I mean..."

"She's my best friend." She yelled.

"She's dead. As much as I wish I could tell you different; believe me I want to but that's the reality. We can't bring her back." He wanted to tell her that he knew it wasn't fair that he got Will back and she had to deal with losing her best friend. He had known when he went looking for her after Eleven had told them (*Gone. Gone. Gone.*) that he was sorry. He had only spoken to Barb a handful of times. She was much more open to speaking to him than anyone else in that group of

people. Then Will had disappeared and everything had shifted for the briefest of moments.

The moment was gone and they had to move along with it.

He watched her pinch her nose as she tried not to start crying. She was still hurting and he was very aware of it. This wasn't something that would just go away. Hell he was still trying to wrap his head around everything that happened.

Will wasn't completely the same. He knew that but he was trying to give him a little room to breathe. "I wish it would have ended up differently." He mumbled as he reached for the sledgehammer and lifted it over his shoulder.

Nancy watched him as he began to chip away at the stone. He had so much pent up rage and sadness and she supposed that this was his only time to let it out. She stayed quiet near him waiting for him to finish the chaos of breaking a part one last remaining part of what would remind him of the time where he was utterly lost.

He ended up on his knees, weeping, uncaring that she was right there. So she went to him – at first only brushing his hair out of his face as his body shuddered in short bursts of sobs that kept coming in closer by each second, then she moved to kneeling behind him and wrapping her arms around his shoulder. "*I got you*," echoing the words he had once said to her after he had rescued her from the Upside Down Place.

He rocked against her. "I'm sorry." He breathed in-between sobs.

"Don't apologize. You keep too much to yourself."

"He's not dead." He breathed.

"I know." She whispered as he settled down a bit. His hand had come up to press against hers.

"I should be relieved. I am relieved. I had prepared to not get that second chance. I orchestrated this whole thing." He gestured to the half toppled off tombstone. There wasn't much left of it.

"Hey." She said softly. He tilted his head slightly so that he could see her face. He hadn't realized that she had been crying too. He couldn't figure out the exact reason why she would be crying. Not over him, certainly not. No one had cried over him, ever.

"I'm right here." She added on.

Maybe she had already realized it, which was something his Mom had told Eleven when she was losing control. It was oddly calming. He realized that he couldn't exactly let go of that feeling he had whenever they were in the same space. No matter how hard he tried to forget that she wasn't his it still crept on him.

"You won't be for much longer." He told her as he looked away untangling himself from her.

"Yes, I will." She sounded so determined that he had a hard time not looking at her. He liked her confidence. Always had even though it rarely came out for everyone to see. Perhaps that was his treat. A stupid thought but it crossed his mind for a brief moment.

He tried not to roll his eyes at himself for the next thing that came out of his mouth but it had slipped out. "Promise?"

She grinned at him and held out her pinky. It was at that moment that he had to laugh, before hooking his pinky over hers. "Promise."

He should have just left it at that but he was used to keeping those tiny moments between them to himself. He pulled her hand up so it was closer to him and he kissed her pinky before quickly letting go. He didn't miss the color that rose to her cheeks. It could have easily been mistaken for the cool air.

He rose to his feet and reached out his hand for her to take. She didn't hesitate, giving his hand a firm squeeze once they were on equal footing.

He reached for the sledgehammer once more only to offer to her. "Barb didn't get a grave. Maybe this is your chance to let it go too."

"I'll never be able to let it go." She said quickly but let go of his hand to take it in her hand. It was pretty heavy for her but she had no

doubt he'd help her if she needed it.

She wasn't wrong after the first swing it had taken a lot out of her – emotionally and physically – so they opted to take turns turning the stone to rubble until there wasn't anything left of it.

He offered her a ride home. She smiled, reaching for his hand that didn't still hold the sledgehammer; he had gotten the final swing.

"C'mon." She urged him.

Stranger Things truly took me by storm. You know when you are fully aware you're gonna love a show but you don't try to have too high of an expectation? That was me with this show. I've watched it two times around - probably about to start it for the third time and basically I came out of it with a little of feels. Like of sadness too but also I've jumped on the ship of Jancy for these cute badass idiots who definitely need to be together in the end. WHAT STEVE? I don't remember any Steve...I'm kidding.

Also my Eleven/Mike feels are still raging so you got a bit of that. SHE'S TOTALLY ALIVE YOU GUYS. I'll cry about it until s2 comes. Duffer Brothers/Netflix you gotta green-light it soon please. My heart needs it!

Anyways I hope you guys enjoyed this. Let me know what you thought.

much love,

day